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The Simon Review

The 1977 Illinois Senate Presidency Fight

An Oral History Project

by

Senator Ken Buzbee – Retired

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Preface

This oral history project concerning the election of the Illinois Senate President in 1977 came about as a result of several conversations between former State Senator Ken Buzbee (D-Carbondale) and Mike Lawrence, former Director of The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. Buzbee had been an active participant in the six-week long battle, and Lawrence had been an active observer as a newspaper reporter in the state capitol. Each felt there were too many good stories, too much interesting history, and too much “good government” to apply to current Illinois politics to let the events slide into the dust bin of ignominy.

From this liaison, a plan was hatched, and Buzbee proceeded to research old newspaper stories from that period in Morris Library at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He was informed of a marvelous book at the University of Illinois Springfield Library, entitled *Illinois Press Summary – 1977*. The staff at the Simon Institute affected its transference to the Morris Library at SIUC and its being checked out to Buzbee. The book’s sheer size was intimidating. It was a compilation of photocopies of every political news story of that year. Eventually Buzbee went through the whole book and tagged each story that pertained to the topic. A packet was made of these pertinent stories, and he began calling former colleagues to tell them about the project and to ask if they would participate in the review of the packet and then agree to a subsequent interview. Everyone agreed to participate except two, and those two didn’t say no, but would not agree to any exact date. After several attempts they weren’t asked any more.

Twelve former senators were interviewed. (See Appendix A for the full list). Tom Hynes (D-Chicago), the principal in the fight, was interviewed twice, due to an electronic recording malfunction. Five of the interviewees were “Regular” Democrats (i.e. people who were from Chicago or routinely voted with Chicago) who supported Hynes. Five were “Independent” or “Insurgent” Democrats (i.e. people who were trying to define a position separate and independent from the Chicago block) who supported Terry Bruce (D-Olney) and two were Republicans who were not involved in the dispute, even though it was rumored many times they were contemplating jumping in on one side or the other. The interview process took Buzbee from Carbondale to Chicago many times, from Rock Island to Springfield, from Breese to Crystal Lake, from southern Wisconsin to southern Florida. In each and every case he was rewarded with a most hospitable reception and complete candor. If some of the old stories were a little embellished after thirty years it was within the limits of “political correctness.” In each case he learned something new that he had not previously known, even though he was involved in every hour of every day’s events. Even though the subject was the 1977 Senate Presidency, each interviewee was encouraged to relate other stories they might think pertinent.

As interviews were completed they were sent off to be transcribed. For the most part the transcriptions were technically complete, but with many errors only correctable by someone knowledgeable about the subject and content of the interview. In some cases no sense or understanding could be made of the interview. To complete the project, Buzbee had to edit the transcriptions by listening to each recording and correct the printed copy. To accomplish this he was assisted by a young undergraduate student employee at the Simon Institute, Tyler Chance, who is a SIUC Presidential Scholar from West Frankfort majoring in political science. They were given a room at the Morris Library where Chance played the digital recording and

corrected the transcript on the computer, while Buzbee would ink-in corrections on a print copy. It took some eighty-five hours for the both of them to work through the thirteen transcripts, but when they finished; they had good and true copies. All of the transcripts are deposited in the Special Collections Section of SIUC's Morris Library. Chance's assistance was invaluable and instrumental in its completion. Also aiding the project was the Simon Institute's Program Coordinator, Emily Burke, who was of incredible assistance in helping set up interviews, preparing mailings, and keeping the logistics flowing.

The Historical Setting

Under the "old" Illinois Constitution of 1870 one member was elected from the state's fifty-eight senate districts, with the Lieutenant Governor as the presiding officer of the body. The Lieutenant Governor could only cast a vote in the event of a tie. The party floor leaders were elected by a majority vote in their respective caucuses. The "new" constitution of 1970 increased the number of senators to 59 and created the office of "President of the Senate," to be elected from within the body. Since this new constitution required "a majority of those elected" (30 votes in the affirmative) to pass a bill, it was assumed 30 votes were needed to elect the Senate Presidentⁱ. In 1969, the Republicans had controlled the Senate thirty-nine to nineteen, with only five of the Democrats being from Downstate. By 1975, the Democrats held a majority in the Senate, and a mini-revolt took place led by some of the Downstate Democrats and Independent Chicago Democrat Dawn Clark Netsch, when they with-held their votes from Chicago leader Cecil Partee for President. Their efforts collapsed in a matter of hours and Partee was elected.

ⁱThis was contested in 1981 when Governor Jim Thompson, acting as the constitutionally mandated presiding officer until the President was elected, ruled a majority of those voting could elect the President. The Senate Democrats immediately filed suit in the Illinois Supreme Court. In a four to three decision the court ruled in favor of the Democrats, saying it did take a majority of those elected. .

In the 1976 gubernatorial election the Republican, Jim Thompson, defeated Mike Howlett, who had beaten incumbent Governor Dan Walker in the Democratic Primary. Democrats controlled the Senate 34 to 25. In December of 1976, longtime Chicago Mayor and Democratic Party leader Richard J. Daley died unexpectedly. In January 1977, these events set the stage for a six-week, one-hundred-eighty-six ballot marathon election of the Senate President. There has never been a fight like it, either before or since. This paper provides the story of that fight.

This was an intra-party conflict between Democrats, with the Republicans initially sitting quietly, happy to see the other side fighting among themselves. This conflict had its genesis in the aforementioned 1975 mini-revolt against Partee. But by 1977, Partee had retired from the Senate, and it was widely assumed that Phil Rock of Chicago would succeed him, Rock had been an Assistant Majority Leader under Partee, and while known as a “loyal Chicago Democrat,” he was extremely competent and generally well-liked by Downstaters, and for that matter, by Republicans. Rock had been elected to the Senate in 1970 along with two other young, bright, competent Democrats: Tom Hynes of Chicago and Terry Bruce of Olney. These three men quickly established a reputation for hard work and an ability to grasp the impact of a piece of legislation, as well as how to use the legislative process to further their political goals. Hynes had been the Chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee the previous session. Bruce had been an Assistant Majority Leader (the one concession extracted from Partee in ’75).

Hynes declared his candidacy for Senate President prior to the start of the 1977 session, and began lining up support from several influential Chicago Democrats. Those included were Senator Richard M. Daley (the son of the late Mayor, and later Mayor himself for some 22 years), Senator Howard Carroll, who had briefly considered running, and Cook County Board Chairman and newly elected Cook County Democratic Party Chairman George Dunne.

The Competing Factors

In early January, Dunne asked Rock to withdraw his candidacy in favor of Hynes, which he did. This was a confusing time in Chicago politics. The elder Daley's death had left a power-vacuum in Chicago and Cook County Democratic Party politics, since he had held the Chairmanship of both party positions as well as being Mayor. Whether the new chairman, Dunne, could have forced Rock to withdraw is debatable. Rock, however, as a party loyalist acceded to his party chair's request and threw his support to Hynes. He would appear again several weeks later as a facilitator in helping to bring about the compromises that eventually ended the standoff.

Bruce was the candidate of the Democratic Study Group (DSG), labeled "the Crazy 8" by the press. This group was made up of seven "Downstate", mostly young Senators, (Elected in 1972: Ken Buzbee (D-Carbondale); Betty Anne Keegan (D-Rockford) upon her death replaced by Vivian Hickey (D-Rockford) ; Don Wooten (D-Rock Island); Elected in 1974: Vince DeMuzio (D-Carlinville) who would serve the longest of the group, and be the first to die; Jerome Joyce (D-Reddick) ; Bill Morris (D-Waukegan), later Mayor of Waukegan; along with fiercely independent Chicago Democrat, law professor, Dawn Clark Netsch (who in later years was elected State Comptroller, and was the unsuccessful Democratic nominee for Governor in 1994). Bruce, even though he was the second youngest of the group at 33, was the most

experienced in the process, having been on the Senate staff as an intern for two years prior to his election in 1970.

This group with the addition of George Sangmeister (D-Joliet), who had served two terms in the House of Representatives prior to coming to the Senate in 1977, made up the nine consistent votes for Bruce until the ultimate settlement. On the initial ballot Gene Johns (D-Marion) voted for, and in fact had nominated Bruce, but switched and voted for Hynes on every subsequent ballot.

The well respected Hynes not only drew opposition from the Democratic Study Group (“Crazy 8” plus one or two others), but also from the newly formed Black Caucus composed of Dick Newhouse (D-Chicago and former candidate for Mayor) , Earlene Collins (D-Oak Park), Kenny Hall (D-East St. Louis) and led by Harold Washington (D-Chicago), later U.S. Congressman and Mayor. Washington was a freshman member of the Senate, but he had served in the Illinois House for a number of years. He was known for his brilliance and legislative acumen. Two other African-American Senators, Charlie Chew (D-Chicago) and Fred Smith (D-Chicago) were pledged to Hynes.

This opposition was aimed not so much at Hynes personally, but at a system of top-down decision making and a lack of willingness to share power. This was reflected in the appointment of committee chairs, the complete power of the Rules Committee to set the agenda for legislative action, and by the punishment of dissident members by defeating their legislative proposals (called “tubing” their bills), as well as a general feeling of intimidation. Hynes promised to fairly address all of these items, but was stymied by distrust and perhaps paranoia on the part of the “Crazies.” The Black Caucus had two demands. They wanted an African-American appointed to leadership, specifically the “Downstater” Hall. Hynes agreed early on to appoint a black

Assistant Majority Leader, but he named the Chicagoan, Chew. The second demand was for Newhouse to become Chairman of the Public Aid Advisory Commission. This was something Hynes could not guarantee, as the Commission was made up of twelve members, three each appointed by the Democratic and Republican Leaders of the Senate and the House. The Commission then elected its Chairperson from the appointed membership. The Commission had a big full-time staff, and had been chaired by Senator Don Moore (R-Midlothian) for a number of years. Newhouse and other Democrats charged that this staff had become abusive in their investigative tactics.

Fairly early on the Democratic Study Group and the Black Caucus, (which nominated and voted for Washington) made a pact to withhold their votes from Hynes until their respective demands were met. Thus the balloting continued on for 185 times with no one receiving the necessary 30 votes to be elected President. With some slight variation periodically, the roll calls were Hynes-21, Bruce-9, Washington-4, and Republican Minority Leader David Shapiro of Amboy-25. The Hynes loyalists were: Chicagoans Arthur Berman, Richard Clewis, John D'Arco, Robert Egan, Norbert Kosinski, Leroy Lemke, Sam Maragos, John Merlo, Richard Guidice, Frank Savickas, Carroll, Chew, Daley, Rock, Smith, and Hynes; From suburban Cook County, Robert Lane (South Holland); and Downstaters: James Donnewald (Breese), John Knuppel (Virginia), Sam Vadalabene (Edwardsville) , and Gene Johns (Marion).

During this six week period there was enough intrigue, speculation, accusation, and consternation to carry the plot of a good spy novel. Young Daley was at the center of a lot of this. The "Crazies" believed at the time that he was responsible for the Hynes candidacy partly to deny Rock, and partly as a show of the force of his influence. Hynes adamantly denied this at the time and in the interviews, saying he decided on his own to pursue the Presidency and then

started lining up support, which included Daley. Rock also said he had no evidence that Daley had intervened, and that Chairman Dunne had asked him to withdraw for the sake of party unity. After interviewing twelve of my former colleagues, including Hynes twice, I have come to believe this also.

Daley knew of the “Crazies’ ” suspicions, and I believe his sense of humor played to those suspicions, as illustrated by his periodic walking over to the Republican side of the aisle and engaging in conversation with certain Senators, to lead us to believe he was trying to cut a deal to secure Republican votes to help elect Hynes. When asked about one of those discussions by a reporter, he said he was asking the Republican member about a fishing trip from which he had just returned. At the time we were absolutely certain Daley was trying to secure Republican votes. I now think he was having a good laugh at our expense, and was talking to the guy about fishing.

The Democratic Study Group met daily and some days two or three times to discuss tactics, strategy, and the latest rumor, many of which were perpetuated by the press. We were sometimes joined by the Black Caucus. We assumed the “Regulars” were doing the same thing, but Jim Donnewald said he didn’t remember their meeting, except when all the members of the Democratic Caucus were involved.

The actual floor sessions, which were presided over by the “rookie” Governor Jim Thompson, did not usually amount to much. That is, no business was taken up because it could not be until a President was elected, committees were appointed and bills were introduced. At times there would be long periods of “downtime”, that is no business was transpiring, but we were “in session,” and the Governor was sitting in the presiding officer’s chair on the podium at the front of the ornate Senate chamber. During these times various Senators would amble up to

the podium and chat with the Governor. At other times the Governor would stroll down to the floor and engage Senators in conversation. Even though Democrats and Republicans participated in these exchanges, it is my belief that Thompson particularly benefited from the relationships he established with the Democrats. He got to know us, and we got to know him, and found to our surprise, we liked him. I believe that six weeks presiding in the Senate chamber paid off in a big way for Thompson over the next several years. It became somewhat commonplace for him to call an individual Senator to ask for a vote on a bill of particular importance to him, or for a Senator to see him in his office to ask for assistance on an appointment for a constituent, or to explain a legislative agenda item. It is important to point out that he was not cooped-up in the Senate Chamber all the time during those six weeks, but might be there an hour or two or three, and would declare a recess until an hour certain, then go down from the Senate on the third floor to his offices on the second floor of the Capitol Building, or he would secret himself in some Senate office behind the chamber to deal with executive paperwork. Thompson's very personal and active role in the legislative negotiations is one that could have been profitably emulated by subsequent governors of Illinois.

The Issues

Seniority always played some role in the Illinois Senate (although probably not to the extent it traditionally had in the U.S. Senate) when it came to committee assignments and in particular, to chairmanships. One of the Democratic Study Group's demands was for equitable distribution of these Chairmanships. Bruce was starting his seventh year in the Senate, the same as Hynes and Rock. Buzbee, Netsch, and Wooten were beginning their fifth years, while Demuzio, Joyce, and Morris, along with Hickey were starting their third year. So the group felt they had earned their due, after having served on "nowhere" committees such as "Pensions and

Personnel”. Traditionally freshmen were not appointed to Appropriations, Revenue, or Executive Committees, and certainly were never given Chairmanships. Enter “the Berman factor.” Art Berman (D-Chicago) was a freshman Senator, although he had served several years in the House. He was a recognized expert in the field of elementary and secondary education. He was the spokesman for the Chicago Public School system in the General Assembly, and was probably one of the few members of either house who understood the school aid formula, an extremely complicated methodology used to distribute state funds to local school districts. Every time a bill was introduced to modify the formula, we would call a career expert at the Illinois Office of Education, who would run computer printouts for each of us showing how the change would affect each school district in our Senatorial district. Hynes announced that he would appoint Berman Chairman of the Education Committee as well as three other freshmen members supporting him to committee chairs. While Berman’s expertise was recognized and admired, he was still a freshman, and most members of the Study Group were more senior. The attitude was, “We’ve played by your rules these past years, and now that it’s our turn, you want to change the rules.”

Other points of contention for the Democratic Study Group included Hynes’ proposal to increase the Democratic Leadership team from four to six with the elevation of the caucus chairman to an extra-pay position. He had promised this to Gene Johns (D-Marion). This would have also meant the expansion of the Republican leadership to six. Eventual resolution of this issue resulted in the increase to six for each party, but with the Caucus Chairs remaining unpaid positions.

The Democratic Study Group wanted an expansion of the Rules Committee, to include some of its members, along with various rules and procedural changes to make the process more

open and transparent. It originally proposed lowering the vote requirement for approval of amendments to the U.S. Constitution from sixty percent to just a majority vote. This was aimed at the attempted passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The DSG also wanted all bills to be called for a vote in numerical order, instead of skipping around on the calendar at the leadership's discretion. In an attempt to stay better informed and to better address the work-load, the DSG proposed a full time staff assistant for each member, and they wanted a toll free number and a telephone on members' desks on the Senate floor. Some of those issues were obviously more important than others.

There were continuous rumors about possible Republican crossovers to vote for Hynes, fueled in part by Daley's being seen talking in hushed tones with Republican Senators. Although there was probably some basis in fact for some of these rumors, it never got past this stage with a small number of Republicans. There was apparently some discussion of this in their caucus meetings, but it always ended with the decision to continue voting for Shapiro, as confirmed by the two Republican interviewees, Bradley Glass (Northfield) and Jack Shaeffer (Crystal Lake). The Senate Republicans were known for their ability to bind their members to a caucus position, which did not allow an individual member to deviate and cast a vote contrary to the agreed upon stance.

The Denouement

Toward the end of the ordeal Wooten told Bruce he thought he could get enough of the "young Turks" Republicans to cross over to elect Bruce. He met with Prescott Bloom (R-Peoria) and one or two other Senators, to start the negotiations to implement such a deal. None of the other members of the DSG was aware of this, and it was never understood how he could have gotten 17 Republicans to vote for Bruce, the number needed if the Black Caucus added their four

votes to the nine of the DSG for the required 30. This effort fell apart over a weekend adjournment. Bruce said in his interview that he never thought he would be elected, and that was really not what the fight was about. He also said that maybe Bill Morris thought for a day or two that Bruce might be elected, but only Wooten maintained that Bruce could win the Presidency.

Beside the continual rumor or threat or possibility of the Republicans jumping into the fray by crossing over to vote for Hynes or Bruce, other potential candidacies emerged toward the end of the six weeks. Jim Donnewald, an Assistant Leader in previous sessions was discussed as a possible compromise by the Regulars. This would have embarrassed Chicago political leaders by having both legislative chambers led by Downstate Democrats, Bill Redmond (D-Bensenville) having already been elected Speaker of the House, and Donnewald, who probably didn't want it. He had publicly stated he would only become a candidate if Rock rejected it, and he may have had trouble getting support from some other Downstaters. Rock re-emerged as a possible compromise, and went back to George Dunne to tell him he was going to rejoin the race. During that meeting Dunne convinced him to act as the conciliator between Hynes and the dissidents, and bring about the end of the fight, which he did.

One of the stumbling blocks to a settlement was removed when Charlie Chew apparently volunteered to remove himself as an appointee to Hynes' leadership team. This allowed Hynes to meet one of the Black Caucus' demands for the naming of Kenny Hall as an Assistant Majority Leader. As noted earlier, their other demand was that Richard Newhouse, be made Chairman of the Public Aid Advisory Commission which Hynes could not be guarantee -, as the evenly split bipartisan Commission elected its own chair. Hynes assured Washington, the Black Caucus leader, he would do everything he could to get Newhouse the Chairmanship, but again he only appointed twenty-five percent of the membership of the Commission.

The withdrawal of Chew, and the agreement to appoint Hall, as well as supporting Newhouse to the extent possible, left the Black Caucus with a dilemma. Their two major demands were being met, but they had made the mutual pact with the Democratic Study Group to not vote for Hynes until both groups got a satisfactory settlement. - If they had thrown their support to Hynes it would have brought his vote total to 25, but would still be five short of what was needed. However, picking up five more votes was easier than nine. While the “Crazies” feared this might happen, the Black Caucus stood by their agreement and continued voting for Washington until the final solution was reached on the 186th ballot.

Early in the process, as mentioned earlier, Governor Thompson had an easy-going relationship with the Senate, and most of its individual members. He made it a point to not get involved with the legislative process of trying to elect a Senate President, as any good presiding officer is supposed to do. He apparently did not try to influence the Republican Caucus during this period.

As time wore on, though, he began to get cranky, as did a lot of the Senators. The pressures of being a “rookie” governor began to bear down on him. The four previous years of a Democratic administration had left a lot of Republican activists hungry for patronage appointments, and he had stacks of résumés he was going through while on the Senate podium. He was also responsible for the annual budget preparation and the budget address to the General Assembly, which was coming up in March. Early in the second week of February, Thompson told the press the Senate Democrats were “wasting his valuable time,” and he intended to keep them in session around the clock until it was settled. He said “We will not adjourn until we have a President.” when they returned the following week. Of course he had no authority, or power, to do this. As the constitutionally mandate presiding officer until a President was elected, he could

only rule on motions, call for roll calls, and announce their results. He could have ignored a motion to adjourn if he chose, but if enough senators left the floor to create a lack of a quorum (30), no business could have transpired. At this point Thompson met with Bruce and Rock, an attempt that apparently led to nowhere, and he was talking to Shapiro about possible Republican involvement, which was also rejected. On a humorous note, Thompson proposed a recess, but was voted down by the body before it was finally resolved at approximately 5:30 a.m. that morning.

Reading the press summaries again chronologically, it is interesting to note how the attitudes of a large number of the press began to change. In the beginning, the dissidents were portrayed as reformers, the “white hats”, the good guys, the Davids standing up to and fighting “the machine”, the monolithic Chicago Democratic organization, the old way of doing things, the Goliath. The press started to get weary as did the participants over time and their stories and editorials reflected it. Smaller papers, which did not have reportorial coverage in Springfield, carried negative stories about the dissidents in particular, and the whole process in general, with their editorial pages reflecting this attitude along with their lack of understanding of what the whole fight was about in the first place. Then the larger news organizations started weighing in, labeling previously named “reformers” as “obstructionists,” who were wasting tax-payer money. One paper opined that we were frivolously collecting our salaries and per diem of \$36 per day, while accomplishing nothing other than holding up the progress of government. Apparently never able to make the connection between the two, they also castigated us for only meeting two or three days a week. We should have met every day until we accomplished the greater good (and drawn more per diem).

As much as we thought we were working in the cause of “participatory democracy” and “good government,” it is fair to say this attitude change by the press was one of the contributing factors in bringing the standoff to a conclusion. Bruce said to a closed meeting of dissidents, “It’s time to end this.”

One of the ongoing sub-plots during this fight was the antics of John Knuppel (D-Virginia) a Downstater who supported Hynes. He was known as a smart legislator who worked very hard and sponsored a lot of meaningful legislation, but who was extremely volatile, eccentric, and seemed to revel in bringing unfavorable attention to himself. He would periodically go out into the domed rotunda of the Capitol building and shout out the name “Lang...horne Bond,” who was Secretary of the Department of Transportation. This was done as an incredibly loud and long yell that could be heard through-out a good portion of the building.

As the Presidency fight dragged on, Knuppel’s disgust and anger with the dissidents, and the notoriety they were receiving seemed to increase. To show his disdain, during some of the roll calls he periodically called out “Alice in Wonderland,” or “Winnie the Pooh,” or “Big Bird,” instead of “Hynes.”

For a few days, Senator Netsch (D-Chicago) had to miss sessions to care for her severely ill husband. During this absence, a newspaper published a picture of her and Buzbee sharing a laugh on the Senate floor. I took this newspaper clipping to the press box at the front of the chamber to inquire as to who was the photographer, as I wanted to buy a copy. This enraged Knuppel, who came charging at me, grabbed the paper out of my hands and tore it into shreds. Even though he was nose to nose with me, he never touched me. After Netsch’s return a few days later, she and I were chatting with Charlie Wheeler, a reporter with the Chicago Sun-Times, and prior to the start of session in front of the press box. We were talking about the confrontation

between Knuppel and myself. At this point, Knuppel entered the chamber from the rear doors, and approached us and demanded we get out of his way. After he got to his seat he picked up a Styrofoam cup of soup, charged down the aisle, and threw it on us. It spattered all three of us, but I got the brunt of it, to the extent that I had to go home and change clothes. I later sent him a cleaning bill, which he never paid. Fortunately, a local TV station camera crew recorded the whole incident. I purchased a copy from them in case I was ever accused of confrontational frivolity (fighting) on the Senate floor in any future campaign. Knuppel and I were not close.

In the early hours of the morning of February 16, 1977 after a sixteen-hour marathon session, agreement was finally reached and the 186th roll call was taken. The Republican Shapiro received 25 votes from his party. Democrat Hynes received 33. Knuppel, in a final display of pique voted “present,” contending Hynes had given away too much to the holdouts. When the seats were chosen on the Senate floor, Knuppel with his high seniority chose to stay next to the press box. When the most junior Democrat was faced with the only desk left being the one next to Knuppel, she refused to sit there, and the Democratic Sergeant-at-Arms had to move across the aisle so she could have his desk.

The Impact of the Fight

The compromise which finally ended the standoff resulted in both sides giving in on some points, the way all political confrontations usually ended in that era. Procedurally, the dissidents achieved an opening up of the legislative process. Tom Hynes, being the intelligent, fair-minded gentleman he was, probably would have implemented several of them anyhow. Fair notice was to be given to a sponsor of the hearing of his or her bill in Committee. Strict deadlines were to be followed in the legislative process so there was not a log jam of bills at the end of the session allowing bad legislation to pass in the confusion. Committee membership was to be

proportionally distributed between Regulars and Independents on the Democratic side. The Democratic Study Group's Terry Bruce was reappointed an Assistant Majority Leader, as was as the Black Caucus's Kenny Hall. Phil Rock (D-Chicago) and Jim Donnewald (D-Breese) two regulars who were also reappointed as Assistant Majority Leaders. Hynes vowed to do all he could to elect Richard Newhouse, chairman of the Public Aid Advisory Commission.

Hynes succeeded in appointing two freshmen who were previous House members to Committee Chairmanships, Art Berman (D-Chicago) – Elementary and Secondary Education, John Merlo (D-Chicago) – Pensions and Personnel. Gene Johns (D-Marion) was named Caucus Chairman and a member of leadership, but with no additional stipend. The President expanded the number of standing Committees from fifteen to eighteen, by splitting Appropriations into two, Education by separating Higher Education from Elementary and Secondary, and dividing Judiciary into Civil and Criminal. Dissidents were given six Committee Chairmanships, and Regulars twelve. The following is the distribution of committee chairs by faction each supported in the president fight:

Dissidents named to Committee Chairs:

Appropriations II- Kenneth Buzbee (Carbondale) funding requests in education, health, corrections, mental health, welfare, agriculture, conservation

Criminal Judiciary-Dawn Clark Netsch (Chicago)

Executive- Don Wooten (Rock Island)

Financial Institutions-Vince Demuzio (Carlinville)

Higher Education-Vivian Hickey (Rockford)

Local Government-Jerome Joyce (Reddick)

Regulars named to Committee Chairs

Appropriations I-Howard Carroll (Chicago) funding requests in transportation, capitol, constitutional officers

Agriculture-John Knuppel (Virginia)

Civil Judiciary- Richard M. Daley (Chicago)

Elections-Norbert Kosinski (Chicago)

Elementary and Secondary Education-Arthur Berman (Chicago)

Executive Appointments-Sam Vadalabene (Edwardsville)

Insurance-Robert Lane (Chicago Heights)

Labor and Commerce-Frank Savickas (Chicago)

Public Health-Fred Smith (Chicago)

Revenue-Robert Egan (Chicago)

Transportation-Charles Chew (Chicago)

Concluding Thoughts

“Participatory Democracy,” a term first used during this whole process by Dawn Clark Netsch, and “fairness” was at the root of the cause of this protracted battle. For the most part the holdouts felt they were successful in achieving both.

Although there were dire forecasts of retribution, dissidence, and just general hatred and discontent during the ensuing two years, there was very little if any evidence of this happening. -

—Those on both sides who had liked colleagues on the other side continued liking them, and those who were disliked, continued to be disliked, but they still worked together, and this was also true in crossing the aisle between the parties. ?

This 1977 fight in the Senate took 186 ballots to elect the President. Ironically, two years earlier, in 1975 the Illinois House of Representatives took 93 ballots, exactly half as many to elect the Speaker. This was an entirely different kind of battle, again “intra” Democratic Party, between long-time leader and World War II Medal of Honor winner, Clyde L. Choate (D-Anna) and grandfatherly and long-time backbencher, Bill Redmond (D-Bensenville). This one was resolved after the Chicago Regulars switched their support from Choate to Redmond.

The interview process for this oral history project was very interesting and informative; however, so many of the 1977 participants could have contributed so much more had we been able to talk before their untimely demise. Among those were: Harold Washington, candidate of the Black Caucus for Senate President, and later U.S. Congressman and then the first African-American Mayor of Chicago; Dr. David Shapiro, Republican Leader and Candidate for Senate President; Vince Demuzio, one of the “Crazies,” who was not only the longest serving senator of the group, but who also rose to be elected Chairman of the Democratic Party of Illinois. Demuzio was the consummate politician enjoying every handshake and putting together legislative deals for the betterment of his constituents, always with a smile, an expletive, and a hearty laugh. Tom Hynes told a great story at his funeral, which was typical of Demuzio. He would enlist President Hynes’ assistance in a piece of legislation or in a project for his district, and would always conclude with, “Now don’t forget Tom, I voted for you for Senate President!” Hynes’ response of, “Vince you voted against me 185 times,” would be met with, “Yow, but I voted for you the 186th time, and that’s the one that counted.” And then hen the hearty laugh.

Others who had passed on included: Kenny Hall, who would have added significantly to this story, since his candidacy for Assistant Majority Leader was eventually successful, as backed by the Black Caucus. He was an extremely likeable, serious legislator, but with a sense of

humor, who was always willing to help others or to seek advice if needed. The stress of the stand-off sent him to the hospital during the fight with a flare-up of stomach ulcers. It was several weeks before he fully recovered. George Sangmeister (Joliet) a former State's Attorney of Will County was a serious, smart, hard-working, "law and order" Senator, who was the ninth member of the "Crazy 8," tried to bring the procedure to a head during the final week by introducing Phil Rock's name again as a candidate (which Rock immediately declined). Prescott Bloom (R-Peoria), one of the "Young Turks", known for his brilliance, great sense of humor, and laid-back approach to life (he had led the Republican negotiation with Wooten over possibly coming over to vote for Bruce). Lastly, my longtime seat-mate, office suite-mate, and close personal friend, Bob Egan (D-Chicago) was also one to pass away. Egan was very much a Chicago Regular, who was also close to Hynes and Rock, but who didn't get along with young Richard Daley. He was a very smart lawyer, opinionated and volatile. He was not much interested in the details of the legislative process, preferring to address the final product, with an "up" or "down" vote. His assessment of the period would have been insightful, funny, and not dispassionate.

Among those still living, I would like to talk with of course with Richard M. Daley. The extent of his role in 1977 is still not all together clear, although I have come to believe he was probably not as involved as I had thought at the time. It had to be a tough time for him. His father had just passed away the previous month, with all the political ramifications of that, as well as the personal loss that was complicating his life. His insight and remembrances would be extremely useful.

Jim Thompson, the Governor, of course played a major role that needs to be explored. His facilitation as the Presiding Officer was marked with fairness and patience (until the very

end). It should be noted that as he left the Senate Chamber after administering the Oath of Office to President Hynes, Thompson was given a standing ovation by both sides of the aisle. As noted earlier in 1981 in the same role, he issued a ruling on the number of votes required to elect the President, which was exactly contradictory to the 30 he had maintained in 1977. I would like to explore this inconsistency with him as well as discuss all the machinations aforementioned, and get his take on my opinion that that six weeks stood him in very good stead, since he was able to use the relationships he established then, especially with Democrats, to move his legislative agenda, and just generally create a cooperative atmosphere. Also comparisons with the style of subsequent Illinois governors would be highly illuminating.

The last surviving member of the Black Caucus, and of the six African American Senators serving at that time is Earlene Collins (D-Chicago), who after serving in the Senate for a number of years, continued her political career as a member of the Cook County Board. Her insights would certainly contribute to a well-rounded historical record.

David Regner (R-Mt. Prospect) was the Republican spokesman on the Appropriations II Committee for a number of years while I was Chairman. He was an old-fashioned conservative. Even though we were philosophically different, we worked together very well. I made it a point to meet with him before Committee meetings to discuss my intentions on various appropriations bills. Quite often, if not most of the time, he would agree with me and would support my decisions. When he didn't agree he would so indicate in our pre-meets, and I would say, "Okay, we'll take a roll-call on that, and I win 10 to 7" (the party memberships split). He would laugh, and say, "Okay. Next case!" Occasionally it would just be just Regner and me, without our membership following either of our leads. That's when I would postpone any action to a future meeting to line up support. He was a conservative, but not doctrinaire, and I was a moderate-

liberal, but not doctrinaire, and we worked together very well, trying to reduce wasteful spending, but providing sufficient funding for efficient government. When we both spoke on an appropriation issue on the floor of the Senate there was seldom opposition from any quarter. It would be interesting to have his input on our 1977 harangue.

So why weren't these folks included? I initially decided to interview twelve former members and the twelve I interviewed were the most relevant and most accessible of the possibilities. I chose those five Regular Democrats, five Independent Democrats, and two Republicans that were directly involved, had expressed interest, and were available. Daley was a little busy as the Mayor of Chicago. Jim Thompson was tied up running a major national law firm. We talked to both Collins and Regner, but never got them scheduled before we completed the process. I would still like to interview all four of them at some future time.

Tom Hynes served fairly and successfully as Senate President for two years without retribution or retaliation. He was then elected Cook County Assessor numerous times, and became a major force in Cook County and national Democratic politics. Terry Bruce continued to serve as an Assistant Majority Leader until his election to the U.S. Congress in 1984, where he served with distinction for eight years. When he left, - he became CEO of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, where he remains to the present time. Phil Rock continued to serve as an Assistant Majority Leader under Hynes, and then succeeded him in the Presidency in 1979. Rock would be elected to that post six more times, serving until 1993 – the longest serving Senate President to date. His stewardship was noted for his fairness and striving to do what was best for Illinois. He also became a major force in Cook County and Illinois Democratic politics.

It is a history that could provide some positive guidance for the politics of today. In my view this is the way the legislative process in a democracy should work. It depends on give-and-

take, compromise, and mutual respect. Otherwise we get the kind of bitter party polarization now found routinely in the U.S. Congress and too frequently in the Illinois General Assembly. In the polarized, no compromise process of today the hard decisions are impossible and the people's interests ignored. This is not a plea to return to "the good old days" from a veteran and retired member of the General Assembly, but it is an appeal for the return to more civility and comity in the legislative process and in politics in general.

Appendix A

Interviewees and Dates of Interviews

Regulars

1. Berman 3/26/08
2. Carroll 3/27/08
3. Donnewald 2/14/08
4. Hynes 4/8/08 & 5/21/08
5. Rock 1/31/08

Crazy 8

1. Bruce 2/28/08
2. Hickey 4/25/08
3. Morris 3/26/08
4. Netsch 1/31/08
5. Wooten 6/19/08

Republicans

1. Glass 6/24/08
2. Schaeffer 3/19/08